



The Insider

www.senate.mi.gov/switalski

Inside State Politics with State Senator Mickey Switalski Senate District 10

May 25, 2006

Welcome to the electronic version of *The Insider*. If you would like to contact me, please feel free to e-mail me at senmswitalski@senate.michigan.gov or call me at my Roseville or Lansing office. You can also meet me in person during my constituent hours, coming to a library near you. Call my office and make an appointment or just walk in. See schedule for details.

Mickey's Letter Bag: Gas Pains

Memorial Day weekend has arrived and with that, summer officially begins. That means warmer temperatures, picnics, vacations and higher gas prices. The last couple of issues of the Insider E-newsletter have focused on gas prices and efforts to promote alternative fuels. Now it's your turn to weigh in. Here are some of your thoughts on gas prices, ethanol and our dependence on foreign oil. Have a safe and wonderful Memorial Day weekend.

Mickey

Isn't it amazing how everybody jumps on the bandwagon when the pressure is on - whatever happened to being proactive instead of reactive when dealing with a crisis?

Ernest Domenick
Sterling Heights

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I agree that gas prices are high and getting higher every week. While alternative fuels and lowering taxes are two ways to ease the pain at the pump, I believe that we need to reduce our dependence on personal vehicles. We need to create an efficient public transportation network. I spent a year in Europe during my university days and I used the public transportation daily for my commute from my student housing to the university campus. I had no problem getting where I needed to go on time.

When I returned to Michigan and had to go back to rush hour commuting to get to the university campus, I began to wonder why metro Detroit couldn't have what I had so enjoyed in Europe. I have visited Chicago and Washington D.C. and have found that their public transportation is efficient and well used. I'm sure that it is the same way in the other large cities in the United States as well.

I believe that we need to start planning for the long term, this means that we need to support public transportation that works. I know that if it were available now, our family would not have two vehicles. I would be using the public transportation and enjoying a less stressful life while on the roads.

Rita Gerstheimer-Seubert
Roseville

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First of all, thank you for your response to my email. In response to your question asking if I think the price of gas would go down if the taxes were limited, I do. I am of the opinion that if gasoline prices are up by say, \$1.00 over last year, the sales tax increases the price by \$.06 a gallon.

By limiting the sales tax amount, the taxes collected on gasoline would be comparable to last year's amount. I don't see this as reducing taxes. In addition, I think all of the taxes, excise and sales, should go to the roads. Education and the general fund should be financed by something other than taxes tied to gasoline. I believe it is socialistic for the government to limit the profits a company can make. Can you tell me how much salary is too much? With oil company profits at 9% and taxes at 23% don't you see something wrong with that picture? Let's open some of our oil resources and get away from OPEC dependency.

Stanley F. Paterson
Sterling Heights

Dear Stan:

Clearly, we disagree. I think \$400 million in a retirement bonus is excessive. I think \$36 billion in profit is excessive. I think being held hostage to foreign oil producers is bad policy.

I will admit I thought, like you, that gas being up \$1.00 would mean an additional 6 cents in tax revenues. So I called Treasury and asked them how much we were up. Their answer? We are not up. "How can that be?" I sputtered.

You might not like the answer, but figures support it. People consume less when the price is high. They also spend more on gas, so they have less to spend on other items. They quit buying other things, and we get less sales tax on those purchases. So it evens out and the result is that gross sales tax revenues to the state are flat.

We probably have more in common that you think.

Mickey

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I would like to join in on promoting conservation in the face of these high fuel prices. I feel that a quick fix, such as the President is promoting by cutting environmental regulations and capping oil company profits, are not the way to go. We vote with our dollars. If we want to cap oil industry profits, we should stop giving them our hard earned money. Alternative fuels and conservation will allow us to turn our backs on these CEO's who enjoy million dollar bonuses, while large portions of the country cannot afford health insurance or an education. I know it is hard to turn away from the "convenience" that cars give us, but I know we can do it if we really care. This is what I fear will not happen, people will not care enough to pull their bike out of the garage, take the bus, petition their cities to invest in public transportation instead of urban sprawl.

One of the letters in the past newsletters mentioned Sweden. While they have a political situation that is quite different from ours, the cost of their oil is much more expensive, they are blowing us out of the water in terms of renewable energy use. (Currently, over 20% of all energy use in Sweden comes from renewable energy. The current goal of the United States is 20% by 2020.) I am excited to be going over there to study alternative energy this summer, and hopefully I will learn a lot that I can bring back to the U.S.

In the meantime, pull that bike out of the garage. Organize groups of people together in your community to get alternative transportation. Use alternative fuels when they become available. We can get there!

Tracy Kerchkof
Roseville

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Ethanol takes more money to produce than it saves. We have reserves in Alaska. Tap them. The tree huggers can take a hike.

One of the reasons gas is so high is that the refineries have so many different blends they have to produce for various parts of the country that the production is slowed and the cost has increased. Stop the nonsense and build more refining capabilities.

Susan Westlake
Clinton Township

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Here I am again! Governor Granholm is making lots of suggestions about getting the gasoline costs down. An offering of good faith would be to forgive the sales tax on those increased prices. Bet it won't happen though.

Milton Berz
Utica

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Loved your story about your Saturn. We are so fed up with feeding the beast of addiction to oil that we were considering getting a Honda Civic. Our present Ford Taurus gets only 24 miles per gallon. But what ABOUT using ethanol? We hear that it takes loads of petroleum products to fertilize, transport, etc. So where is the savings?

Marie Fehribach
Sterling Heights

Mickey's TV Insider Show

Check out my TV Insider Show coming to a television station near you. Watch me interview local guests about politics, life, issues and concerns to our district, including my recent show commemorating the Asian-Pacific Heritage Month.

Sterling Heights

Every Saturday and Sunday at 12:30 p.m.
(Comcast Channel 5/WOW Channel 10)

Utica

Every Wednesday at 9 a.m.
(Comcast Channel 5/WOW Channel 10)

Clinton Township

Last week of every month- Sat thru Thurs
(Comcast Channel 5/WOW Channel 10)

Roseville

Various Times
(Comcast Channel 18)

*Please note that Sterling Heights/Utica/Clinton Township will show the TV Insider Show on Comcast Channel 5 and Wide Open West Channel 10. Clinton Township will air the TV Insider Show at various times during the last week of every month. Roseville can see the TV Insider Show on Comcast Channel 18.

Coffee Hours

*Since my District Office is in Roseville, I do not have set coffee hours in Roseville. However, I encourage you to visit the Roseville office. We even have a coffee pot. Everyone is welcome to attend the coffee hours and discuss their issues and concerns.

June 5
7-9 p.m.

Location: Sterling Heights Public Library
(40255 Dodge Park)
Sterling Heights

June 26
7-9 p.m.

Location: Clinton-Macomb Public Library
(40900 Romeo Plank)
Clinton Township

Contact My Office

Website: <http://www.senate.michigan.gov/switalski/>

Email: senmswitalski@senate.michigan.gov

Lansing Office

Senator Mickey Switalski
Senate District 10
410 Farnum
PO Box 30036
Lansing, Michigan 48909

(866)303-0110 toll free
(517)373-7315
Fax-(517)373-3126

District Office

28311 Utica Road
Roseville, MI 48066

Monday through Friday
9:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M.

(586)774-2430
Fax-(586)774-0012